

NAME: Imaoka, Tsuya DATE OF BIRTH: 1885 PLACE OF BIRTH: Nagasaki
Age: 90 Sex: F Marital Status: W Education: High School

PRE-WAR:

Date of arrival in U.S.: 1915 Age: 30 M.S. M Port of entry: Seattle
Occupation/s: 1. Housewife 2. 3.
Place of residence: 1. Seattle, Washington 2. Mt. View, Ca. 3. Oakland, Ca.
Religious affiliation: None until 1932 - Seventh Day Adventist
Community organizations/activities:

EVACUATION:

Name of assembly center: Walerga Assembly Center
Name of relocation center: Tule Lake WRC & Topaz W.R.A.C.
Dispensation of property: Names of bank/s:
Jobs held in camp: 1. 2.
Jobs held outside of camp:
Left camp to go to: Los Angeles, California

POST-WAR:

Date returned to West Coast:
Address/es: 1. Los Angeles, California 2. Sacramento, California
3.
Religious affiliation: Seventh Day Adventist
Activities: 1. 2. 3.
If deceased, date, place and age at time of death:

Name of interviewer: Heihachiro Takarabe Date: 10/10/75 Place: Sacramento, Ca.
Translator: Yessika Akamatsu

NAME: TSUYA IMAOKA

AGE: 90

DATE OF BIRTH: 1885

PLACE OF BIRTH: Nagasaki Ken

YEAR OF ENTRY INTO THE USA: 1915, 30 years old

MAJOR OCCUPATION: House Wife

CAMP: Tule Lake

DATE OF INTERVIEW: October, 10, 1975

PLACE OF INTERVIEW: Sacramento

INTERVIEWER: Heihachiro Takarabe

TRANSLATOR: Yasuka Akamatsu

Mrs. Tsuya Imaoka, Sacramento, Calif.

Age: 90

Interviewed by Rev. H. Takarabe on 10-10-75

Q: Please tell me your name.

A: My name is Tsuya Imaoka (maiden name Tsuya Tanaka).

Q: What part of Japan are you from?

A: I am from Nagasaki, Japan.

Q: When were you born?

A: I was born in Meiji 18 (1885) and I am 90 years old now.

Q: You are very healthy, aren't you?

A: Yes, I am. I was using reading glasses until last year but I found out that I could read without glasses and also thread a needle. I sew or knit everyday.

Q: Did you attend school while you were in Japan?

A: I had some education in Japan. My father was a calligrapher and he also wrote poems. Many village people came to study under him. I learned from him also.

Q: Was your father a very stern person?

A: Yes, old timers were pretty stern. He served under the Saga area feudal lord. My grandfather on my mother's side also served the lordship.

Q: How was your mother?

A: She was the daughter of a person who served the lordship.

Q: Was she strict?

A: She was a very gentle person but strict in her teachings.

Q: How many brothers and sisters did you have?

A: There were four of us. I had an elder brother and two elder sisters. I was the youngest child.

Q: Do you remember anything about your family?

A: My father was a village master and didn't help the farm at all. I remember that my mother had to worry about the farm. I was young and didn't know well but I think they had other people operating the farm on the sharecrop basis. My father was always writing.

Q: Did you have fun as a child? Did you play with other children?

A: We didn't mingle with other children. We played with our cousins and relatives. When I think about it now, I feel embarrassed. (Note: Families who served the feudal lord were considered in the higher society.)

Q: What you have learned from your parents, has it helped you through your life?

A: Yes, it has.

Q: In what way?

A: I am thankful of the education I received from them. My parents were very strict. My brother went to another town to attend school. My father would get very upset if my brother wrote letters to my parents carelessly or without respect. My mother intervened and asked my father to forgive him because my brother was probably very busy and had to write in a hurry so he made some mistakes.

Q: When you were young, did you learn about Sontoku Ninomiya (a scholar)?

A: I probably did but recently my memory is not good.

Q: What was your parents' religion?

A: They were "Zenshu" Buddhists. My father went outside every morning and prayed toward all directions (east, west, north and south). Next, he went to the well and prayed to the God of Water and then he came inside the house and worshipped. When I was 16 years old, a friend came and asked me to go to the Buddhist Temple with her. I went to my parents for permission but my father said I was still a young girl and I owed my life to God and that I did not have to go to the temple to worship the dead. I had to tell my friend I had something to do and could not go with her. My father's word made me ponder about religion. I thought at the time, the most important God was the "God of Air." I could not find "God of Air" so I didn't believe in any religion until I was 47 years old.

My husband passed away when I was 47 years old leaving 5 children with me. I was born as the youngest child of the family and I was physically weak. I never thought I could come to America. My grandfather was a doctor and there were many doctors among the relatives. They told me if I took it easy I could live any place and they thought coming to America was alright. After my husband passed away, a friend told me that I had to take care of myself and stay healthy to raise my 5 children. She told me there was a class on nutrition. Since I had small children and could not go out in the evenings, she arranged to have the lecturer come to my home. The person that came was the Rev. Nagaki. He is a Seventh Day Adventist minister and has a church in Mt. View now. He taught me the Bible and I became a Seventh Day Adventist. Since then I have become very healthy and am still living.

Q: I want to go back to the time you were in Japan. Was there any special happenings in your village while you were there?

A: I can't think of any special happening.

Q: Were you in school at 16?

A: Yes, I was.

Q: There weren't many attending school then, were there?

A: The school just opened about that time and very few attended.

Q: Do you remember how many years there were in the grade school?

A: I think it was 4 years and I went 4 years of high school. I learned more from my father. More students came to my father than to the school.

Q: What did you like the most in school?

A: I don't think I had any preference. When I first attended the school, the teacher asked if anyone could count up to one sen (one cent). I told him I could so he made me start counting. I started ichi-rin, ni-rin, san-rin, yorin (4/10 of a sen). The teacher interrupted and said I should say shi-rin instead of yo-rin. I went home that day and said to my father "tadaima" (means I have come home. We had to say this as a courtesy). He asked me what I learned that day. I mentioned about the shi-rin. He scolded and hit me so hard I started crying. My mother wondered what had happened and started calming down my father. I was swollen but the next day, my father took me to school, met the principal and another teacher and he mentioned to them that there is no shi-rin. Since then they started to say yo-rin instead of shi-rin. My father was not a person to hold back. He taught us the way to live our lives.

Q: Do you remember the Japanese-Chinese War or the Japanese-Russian War?

A: I remember the Japanese-Chinese War. I was still young then.

Q: How did you come to America?

A: I was married in Japan and my eldest son was born there. My

husband was in America working for the government. Since it was hard for him to make many trips to Japan to see us, he made arrangements for us to come to America.

Q: Was your husband a representative of the Japanese Government?

A: No, he worked for the U.S. Government. He came to America earlier to study and later got this job. He returned to Japan to get married then came back to the U.S.A. again.

Q: Did you know him?

A: No, I didn't. My elder sister was in the city of Nagasaki and she is the one who made arrangements to have him meet me. Later we got married and my eldest son was born in Japan.

Q: Were your parents against your marriage to a man who was working in a foreign country?

A: No, they weren't because they thought he had a good position.

Q: Was the marriage done with the understanding of the parents of both sides?

A: No, his parents were deceased.

Q: What part of Japan was he from?

A: He was from "Iyo" (Shikoku Island).

Q: Where was he working in the United States?

A: He was in Seattle, Washington.

Q: He must have had a good knowledge of English.

A: Yes, he was very efficient with the English language. He graduated from a school in this country.

Q: What school did he graduate?

A: I do not know what school it was.

Q: When did you come to Seattle?

A: I came in 1915.

Q: How old were you then?

A: I must have been close to 30.

Q: How old were you when you got married?

A: I think I was 25. My eldest son is 65 years old now.

Q: What did you think America was like?

A: I didn't think much about it. I was teaching sewing at home before I came to America.

Q: When you first saw Mr. Imaoka, what did you think of him?

A: I didn't have any comments.

Q: Was he handsome?

A: No, he wasn't handsome. I had heard of America and wanted to come if my parents approved. We didn't do anything against our parents wishes those days. I think it was because we learned this in our moral training lessons. I worried about my health

but I am still living at this age. I owe it to God. He gave me everything I needed. God sustains all living creatures and I thank God for everything.

Q: Did you live in Seattle when you first came to America?

A: Yes, all of my children except the eldest were born there.

Q: What was your impression of Seattle?

A: I thought it was a nice place. I owe it to my husband.

Q: How did you feel when you first saw caucasians and black people?

A: In those days, I didn't see any black people.

Q: How did you feel toward caucasians?

A: I didn't feel any difference from other people. There were many Japanese immigrants. I tried to be nice to them.

Q: While you were traveling on the ship to Seattle, do you remember of anything?

A: I was seasick all the way and stayed in a hospital room.

Q: Did you feel any inconvenience when you came to Seattle?

Did you have any hardship?

A: I didn't have such a hard time.

Q: How was your English?

A: I couldn't speak English at all and I still can't speak it.

Q: Wasn't it inconvenient when you went shopping?

A: There were many Japanese stores and I didn't have trouble shopping. When English was necessary my husband was there.

Q: Did you have any financial difficulty?

A: Not especially--

Q: Where did your husband pass away?

A: In Mt. View, Calif. (in 1931).

Q: How long did you live in Seattle?

A: We left Seattle in 1924. We lived in Mt. View until 1938 and then moved to Oakland.

Q: After your husband passed away, how did you make a living?

A: The older children worked as school boy and school girls and attended school. They did all sorts of jobs. Husband had a life insurance but that wasn't much. The children did without many things they wanted. My brother in Japan (Kyoto) wrote and told me to return to Japan with the children as he wanted to help us. However, after discussing the matter with the children, we decided to stay in America. All my children worked their way through school (a daughter helped answer some questions).

Q: You must have had a hard time then, did you not?

A: Yes, we went through quite a hardship.

Q: What did your husband do in Mt. View?

A: He passed away soon after we came there. He was 52 years old. When we were in Seattle, he often took the children to fishing, sailing, and etc. I have 31 or 32 grandchildren and great-grandchildren now.

Q: Where were you when Pearl Harbor was attacked?

A: I don't remember well anymore. My memory was pretty good until a few years ago (a daughter says Mrs. Imaoka and a son moved to Sacramento when the war broke out).

Q: What camp did you evacuate to?

A: My son and I went to Walerga Assembly Center and then to Tule Lake War Relocation Center.

Q: Did your son go into service from Tule Lake?

A: Yes, he did. That was before the Tule Lake Center became a segregated center. After it became a segregated center, I went to Topaz W.R.A. Center.

Q: When you were asked about your loyalty, did you say you were loyal to America?

A: Yes, my children were born over here.

Q: Did you think it was alright for your son to serve in the U.S. Army?

A: I thought he should go if he was taken in.

Q: Did your neighbors say anything?

A: No, they didn't.

Q: Were you a Seventh Day Adventist then?

A: Yes, I was. I have been a member almost 45 years.

Q: Were church members close together as a group?

A: No, we were scattered.

Q: Were there any trouble in Tule Lake ?

A: There probably was but I stayed out of it and didn't even talk about it.

Q: You were in Topaz for a while, How long?

A: I don't remember.

Q: (To the daughter) Were you with your mother?

A: The daughter was married and her family was sent to Minidoka W.R.A. Center.

Q: Were you over 60 at the time of the evacuation?

A: Yes, I was.

Q: Did you have a hard time during the war?

A: I may have but I don't remember. Her daughter says the hardest time was right after her father passed away and right after they came out of the relocation centers. While in camp, her mother was active visiting people and doing evangelistic work.

Q: What did your husband die of?

A: He died of a hemorrhage.

Q: You must have been shocked.

A: Yes, I was. My brothersent me some money from Japan.

Q: Your children were quite grown when your husband died, weren't they?

A: The youngest was 9. I forgot all the hardships and I thank God for now. I just hope I stay well enough so that I will not be a burden to my children.

Q: Do you remember any other old-time stories?

A: I don't think too much about the past. I try to be faithful to my religion.

Q: The Sanseis are now interested in their Japanese background. Do you think it is a good thing?

A: I think it is a good thing.

Q: Do you want to convey anything to the future generations?

A: I think they should learn good manners and etiquette. We were taught very strictly about our manners.

Q: Do you think manners and etiquette are important?

A: Yes, I do.

Q: Anything else? The old-timers say it is good for a person to

go through hardship.

A: I think persons who went through hardship have endurance. Children's education have to start when they are very young. We must learn how to get along with people and etcs. I am old and I don't have much to say anymore.

Q: Where did you return to when you left camp (W.R.A.)?

A: The daughter says her husband, a chiropracter, couldn't find office space in Sacramento so they went to Los Angeles. Mrs. Imaoka has been living with them since. They are in Sacramento now.

Q: Have you worked outdoors since you came to U.S.A.?

A: No, I haven't because I have a weak heart. You can't tell from outside whether I have a weak heart or not.

Q: Were your parents tall?

A: No, not that tall. (Daughter says her mother was 5 ft. 1 1/2 inches tall).

Q: If anyone wants to hear this tape, is it alright to let them hear this?

A: Yes, it's all about myself and not about others.

Q: We want to summarize the Issei stories and publish books. Can we have literary rights to these tapes? Do you want us to use a fictitious name or your real name in the event we use your story?

A: Please use my real name.

THE END

(Translated by Y. Akamatsu)